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## VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Speech

Max S. Baucus

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Senator \* or Department\*: **BAUCUS**

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**June-1978**

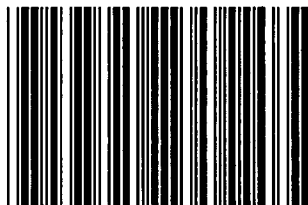
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**VFW Speech**

**06/17/1978**

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BAUCUS

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Max

FROM: Pete

DATE: June 15, 1978

SUBJECT: VFW Speech, Saturday, June 17

I am enclosing some reading materials for your speech before the VFW Saturday. Besides the CRS material, there is a speech by Congressman Ray Roberts which will give you an idea of the tone he uses in these addresses.

There were 2 National Commanders of the VFW from Montana

Mr. John Mahan - 1958-59

Mr. Robert Merrill - 1942-43

As you know, these are the patron saints of the VFW. You might remark that it is quite unusual for such a small state to produce 2 leaders.

As you know, Mr. Mahan is presently a practicing attorney in Helena. Until 1977, he served the Veterans Administration as Director of VA cemeteries. He was not reappointed by Carter, possibly because of his membership in the Subversive Activities Control Board under Johnson and Nixon. Steve says he supported Hatfield, but is with you now.

Mr. Merrill is presently living in San Diego, California.

As you know, they will not be pleased with your stand on the Panama Canal. In general, they are disappointed with President Carter. They disagreed with the pardon of the draft evaders, and the new "less than honorable" discharges. Now they are concerned with more job programs for Vietnam veterans and preserving veterans job preference.

- Thank you - dynamic - Bob Russ
  - John Mahan + Robert Merrill
  - Helped maintain strong military
  - Yet, still comes down to one thing: soldiers
  - Unfortunately, our nation tends to forget
  - Must work w/ Nat Comm, Wasylik + Cooper Holt
  - VA + HEW
  - Pension/benefits bill moving
  - Vet Preference?
- Dick Grech  
ch West  
- Kay Mast  
Hargl  
- %  
Down  
Ad

Pete

VFW SPEECH

June

GOOD EVENING. IT'S AN HONOR TO STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY. I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU AND YOUR STATE COMMANDER, BOB RUSS, FOR INVITING ME TO SPEAK WITH YOU.

THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS IS A DYNAMIC, INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATION. IT IS AN ORGANIZATION WHOSE PRIMARY GOAL IS AS SOLID AND CLEARLY STATED AS A GRATEFUL AMERICAN COULD HOPE FOR:

"THE VFW PROTECTS OUR COUNTRY'S DEFENDERS FROM THE DISADVANTAGES AND LIABILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH MILITARY SERVICE."

AS ONE AMERICAN WHO HAS NOT FORGOTTEN YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, I SALUTE AND CONGRATULATE YOU.

~~I'D LIKE TO PREFACE MY SPEECH WITH A FEW THOUGHTS ON NATIONAL DEFENSE.~~

~~WE ALL~~ BELIEVE IN A STRONG AMERICA. TO KEEP AMERICA STRONG AND FREE, WE MUST HAVE A STRONG MILITARY. ~~RECENTLY I VOTED TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF MONEY BUDGETED FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE. THIS WAS NOT A HAPHAZARD VOTE --~~ I BELIEVE THAT WE MUST PLAN OUR DEFENSES CAREFULLY AND SPEND WHATEVER AMOUNTS ARE REQUIRED TO PRESERVE OUR NATIONAL SECURITY AND OUR LEADERSHIP ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS. AND YOU CAN BE CERTAIN I WILL WORK TO MAINTAIN MONTANA MILITARY BASES AS LONG AS ~~THEY~~ <sup>THEY</sup> CONTRIBUTE TO OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE.

BUT NATIONAL DEFENSE, NO MATTER HOW ELABORATE AND TECHNICALLY COMPLEX, STILL COMES DOWN TO ONE THING: THE SOLDIER. THE PERSON WHO IS WILLING TO SACRIFICE THE COMFORT

AND SAFETY OF CIVILIAN LIFE TO PROTECT WHAT HE BELIEVES IN.  
YOU ARE SPECIAL, NOT JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE WORKING TO  
DEFEND THE RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS OF YOUR LESS-FORTUNATE  
COMRADES, BUT BECAUSE YOU CHOSE TO SERVE YOUR COUNTRY WHEN  
YOUR COUNTRY NEEDED YOU -- AND YOUR COUNTRY IS GRATEFUL.

BUT NATIONS FORGET ALL TOO FAST THOSE WHO SACRIFICED  
SO GREATLY. THERE IS AN OLD RHYME ABOUT VETERANS WHICH  
STATES IT WELL:

FOR IT'S "TOMMY THIS," AND "TOMMY THAT,"  
AND "CHUCK HIM OUT! THE BRUTE!"  
BUT IT'S "SAVIOR OF THE COUNTRY,"  
WHEN THE GUNS BEGIN TO SHOOT!

SINCE THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR, THE BUDGET OF THE  
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HAS DECREASED FROM 5.1% OF THE  
TOTAL NATIONAL BUDGET IN 1975 TO 3.8% IN FY 1979.

TO GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF HOW MUCH 5.1% OF THIS YEAR'S  
BUDGET REPRESENTS, IF WE WERE STILL APPROPRIATING THAT  
PERCENTAGE, OUR VETERANS BUDGET WOULD BE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD  
OF \$29 BILLION INSTEAD OF THE \$21 BILLION WE ARE TRYING TO  
GET.

THAT DOWNWARD SHIFT SIGNALS AN ALARMING TREND TO THOSE  
OF US WHO CONSIDER IT A NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO AID THE  
MEN AND WOMEN WHO DEFENDED OUR COUNTRY DURING ITS TIME OF  
NEED.

FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE DEDICATED, CAPABLE ORGANIZATIONS  
IN WASHINGTON LOOKING OUT FOR THE VETERANS OF AMERICA. THE  
VFW IS A LEADER IN THIS CAUSE -- AND WE ARE INDEED FORTUNATE

TO HAVE MEN LIKE COMMANDER JOHN WASYLIK AND YOUR WASHINGTON EXECUTIVE, COOPER T. HOLT, WATCHING OVER THE LEGISLATIVE SCENE.

COOPER PULLS NO PUNCHES WHERE THE WELL BEING OF VETERANS IS CONCERNED. THEY TELL ME THAT WHEN A TOP VA OFFICIAL IS TOLD BY HIS SECRETARY THAT COOPER IS ON THE LINE, THEY SAY A SILENT "OH MY GOD" BEFORE PICKING UP THE PHONE.

MY MESSAGE TO YOU TODAY IS THIS: <sup>WE</sup> YOU MUST GET FULL FORCE BEHIND COOPER AND YOUR OTHER LEADERS, AND LET THE POWERS THAT ~~KNOW~~ KNOW THAT YOU WON'T STAND TO HAVE THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION STRIPPED OF ANY SMOOTHLY FUNCTIONING PROGRAMS.

THE ATTACKS COME FROM ALL SIDES -- HEW, THE ADMINISTRATIVE INTEREST GROUPS -- EVERYONE WANTS TO TAKE A BITE OUT OF THE APPLE. AND I'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN HUNDREDS OF TIMES -- WORTHWHILE EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS GET PHASED OUT BECAUSE OF THE FINITE NUMBER OF DOLLARS AVAILABLE IN THE FEDERAL TREASURY.

THIS IS WHY YOU NEED TO STAY ACTIVE -- AND VOCAL.

FOR YEARS, HEW HAS BEEN TRYING TO TAKE OVER THE 172 HOSPITALS OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION -- AND FOR GOOD REASON. THE VA HOSPITAL SYSTEM WITH ALL ITS COMPLEXITIES, IS CERTAINLY ONE OF THE FINEST SYSTEMS OF MEDICAL CARE IN THE WORLD. THEY SEE THE VA HOSPITAL SYSTEM AS A POTENTIAL CORNERSTONE TO THE PROPOSED NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE SYSTEM, THAT WOULD CARE FOR ALL AMERICANS FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE.

THIS MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN -- WE NEED TO PRESERVE VETERANS HOSPITALS FOR VETERANS.

TWO OTHER AREAS I AM CONCERNED WITH ARE PENSIONS AND

PAYMENTS TO VETERANS AND ELIGIBLE SURVIVORS. NEXT MONDAY THE HOUSE WILL DEBATE A BILL, ~~H.R. 10113~~, TO INCREASE PENSION AND SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS ALONG SIMILAR FORMULAS. I SUPPORT THIS BILL BECAUSE IT ASSURES THAT PENSIONERS WILL GET A FULL COST-OF-LIVING INCREASE EACH YEAR AT THE SAME TIME SOCIAL SECURITY RATES ARE RAISED. THIS MEANS PENSIONS WILL NO LONGER GO DOWN WHEN SOCIAL SECURITY GOES UP. FOR ANY PENSIONER NOT BENEFITTED BY THE LAW, CURRENT PENSION PAYMENTS WOULD BE PROTECTED.

ON THE LEGISLATIVE FRONT, WE RECENTLY WENT THROUGH A TERRIFIC BATTLE IN THE HOUSE TO SAVE 3,000 VA HOSPITAL BEDS, PREVENT CURTAILED MEDICAL RESEARCH AND CONSTRUCTION, AND HASTEN PENSION REFORM AND OTHER PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS.

THE DECISIVE ROUND CAME ON THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE WHEN CONGRESSMAN <sup>Key</sup> ROBERTS INTRODUCED <sup>AND THE HOUSE ADOPTED</sup> AN AMENDMENT THAT ADDED OVER <sup>#1</sup> A BILLION DOLLARS TO THE HOUSE BUDGET AUTHORITY FOR THE VA. ~~ADOPTION OF THE ROBERTS AMENDMENT BY A 362-33 VOTE MARGIN DEMONSTRATED THE STRONG SENTIMENT IN THE HOUSE FOR ADEQUATE FUNDING AND MODERNIZING VETERANS PROGRAMS.~~ \$170 MILLION WAS ADDED TO VA MEDICAL PROGRAMS, AND THE OVERALL BUDGET PASSED BY THE HOUSE INCREASED FROM \$19.2 BILLION TO \$21.0 BILLION.

~~NOW THE FATE OF THE BUDGET IS IN THE HANDS OF THE SENATE WHICH MUST PASS THE MEASURE BEFORE IT IS SENT TO THE PRESIDENT.~~

~~THIS INCREASE CAME AFTER A LOT OF HARD WORK -- BOTH FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND FROM OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES. AS I'M SURE YOU ARE AWARE, ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE LOBBIES BELONGED TO THE VFW. YOUR WASHINGTON OFFICE CAN CLAIM A LARGE SHARE OF THE CREDIT FOR PASSING THAT MEASURE.~~

~~GOVERNMENT~~ CONCERNING VETERANS PREFERENCE IN FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT. THIS IS AN ISSUE WHICH HAS BEEN TIED TO THE PRESIDENT'S NEW PROPOSAL FOR CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.

I QUESTION THE VALIDITY OF THE PRESENT ~~CRITICISMS~~ <sup>CRITICISMS</sup> ~~MOTIVES~~ <sup>MOTIVES</sup> AND ~~CRITICISMS~~ <sup>CRITICISMS</sup> ~~BACKGROUND~~. THERE SEEMS TO BE A NOTION THAT VETERANS ARE GETTING MORE THAN THEIR FAIR SHARE OF FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT.

FRANKLY, I FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE SINCE APPROXIMATELY 50% OF THE FEDERAL WORKERS ARE VETERANS AND 48% OF THE NATIONAL WORKING FORCE IS COMPOSED OF FORMER MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY. MOREOVER, I AM NOT ~~TOO~~<sup>P</sup> AVERSE TO GIVING OUR VETERANS AN EDGE WHEN IT COMES TO ~~DOING THE BEST~~ FEDERAL JOBS. IN FACT, THERE IS A BILL PRESENTLY PENDING WHICH I SUPPORT, TO ALLOW VETERANS TO BE GIVEN JOBS ~~OF~~<sup>1</sup> ~~GRADE 7~~ (APPROXIMATE ~~\$12,500~~) JOBS WITHOUT APPLYING THROUGH THE FEDERAL REGISTER. THESE JOBS HELP ESPECIALLY THE YOUNGER VETERANS WHO ARE NOT AS FORTUNATE AS THEIR CIVILIAN COUNTERPARTS IN RECEIVING AN EARLY EDUCATION AND JOB EXPERIENCE.

IN GENERAL, I BELIEVE THAT A REASONABLE POLICY OF AIDING VETERANS, PARTICULARLY YOUNG VETERANS, IS APPROPRIATE AND EASILY COMPATIBLE WITH OUR NATIONAL POLICIES. ~~I AM WORKING TO ENSURE THAT OUR MOST RECENT VETERANS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THE BENEFITS THEY ARE ENTITLED TO. IT IS HEARTENING TO NOTE THAT APPROXIMATELY 65% OF THE 8 MILLION VIETNAM VETERANS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO THEM BUT THERE ARE STILL LARGE NUMBERS UNEMPLOYED AND IN NEED OF~~



MEDICAL AND OTHER TYPES OF AID. YOU CAN BE SURE THAT IN THE HOUSE (AND HOPEFULLY IN THE SENATE!), I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TO RETAIN AND ENHANCE THOSE SERVICES.

I KNOW IT GOES AGAINST THE GRAIN FOR VETERANS TO CLAIM THEY ARE A SPECIAL BREED, BUT THEY ARE. THE DEBT OUR COUNTRY OWES YOU IS CONSIDERABLE, AND WE NEED TO INSURE THAT THIS DEBT IS REPAYED.

AGAIN, I PLEDGE TO CONTINUE TO WORK, LISTEN AND LEARN. MY DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN. THE ISSUES ARE COMPLEX AND VARIED, BUT WITH YOUR HELP AND ADVICE, AS WELL AS YOUR CONTINUED EFFORTS IN WASHINGTON, I FEEL CERTAIN WE CAN CONTINUE TO ~~HEL~~ ~~HELP~~ OUR VETERANS.

THANK YOU.

I KNOW I COVERED A VERY LIMITED RANGE OF ISSUES TODAY, AND I WOULD BE GLAD TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU HAVE WITH REGARDS TO NATIONAL DEFENSE -- THE ECONOMY -- MY CAMPAIGN, ETC

XFW Andrew in DC